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A FUNCTIONAL INTERPRETATION

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The Revolving Door: A Functional Interpretation *

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L'auteur fait l'analyse de la fonction des principaux systèmes sociaux pertinents dans la vie des personnes accusées d'ivrognerie, afin d'expliquer la récidive qui porte à croire que ceux-ci sont engagés dans un tourniquet dont ils ne peuvent s'échapper. Les droits acquis à la force policière de mettre sous arrêt les personnes ivres s'appuient sur l'utilité de cette mesure pour satisfaire aux désires de la population relatifs au maintien de l'ordre et permettre le contrôle des hommes sans domicile et sans liens familiaux. Bien que la mise en arrestation protège de blessures corporelles l'homme en état d'ivresse, elle fait naître en lui un dépit qui contribue à son aliénation. La fonction de triage s'effectue de façon rudimentaire dans les cours de justice et elle rend inévitable l'emprisonnement fréquent des prévenus sans domicile; ceci, bien que l'étude des sentences attribuées reflète certains compromis qui indiquent l'existence d'un conflit entre les notions de maladie et de criminalité à l'égard de l'ivrognerie. La prison joue un rôle complémentaire à l'endroit de la vie chaotique et non productive de la société des clochards: elle offre certaines des rétributions d'un job régulier, un système stable d'interactions et la possibilité de se remettre en santé. Elle contribue aussi au maintien de la société des clochards parce qu'elle est un moyen de socialisation et un réseau de renseignements. Les collectivités de clochards, par ailleurs, donnent au buveur une source régulière d'alcool et des camarades; elles soutiennent ainsi le comportement déviant. L'auteur prétend que le système

Anatole France has said: "The law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the street, to steal bread." To this we may add: it also forbids the rich as well as the poor to be drunk in a public place. The distinction between a private and a public place is an old and an honourable one in our legal tradition. The institution of privacy, sanctified in law, has given us historically considerable freedom from coercion when under our own roofs. However, when, in keeping with this tradition, the law has defined certain acts, such as getting too drunk to walk properly, as legitimate if done in private but illegal if done in public, it has loaded the dice against the lower classes. Social class and access to private places are closely related, particularly access to enough private places to cover most of one's social life.[1] And when the law has made imprisonment a penalty for the offence, it has in some measure helped to increase the initial vulnerability by making it more difficult for the offender to keep a job, a residence, a family relationship, and other ties to private places. It is the end result of such a process that we are concerned with in this article: the chronic drunkenness offender, or what has become known as the revolving door problem.

The term "revolving door" is descriptive of the cycle of public intoxication, arrest, trial, incarceration, and release that dominates the life of the Skid Row alcoholic. Since he is the very model of the recidivist and, once involved in this pattern, rarely escapes, it is obvious that an overriding consequence of the interaction of the main systems of the revolving door phenomenon — the police, the courts, the jail, and Skid Row drinking society — is the perpetuation of the proscribed behaviour. To understand how this is brought about, it is necessary to examine some of the functions performed for both the community and the offenders by these several systems.

The statements that follow are based on a study of chronic drunkenness offenders in Ontario that has extended over several years.[2] The chief sources of data have been:

(a) An interdisciplinary study of some 230 chronic offenders in the Toronto Jail, comprising extended interviews, a medical examination and laboratory tests, psycho-

*This is a revised version of a paper delivered to the Canadian Conference on Alcoholism, Toronto, March, 1966.

[1]Arthur L. Stinchcombe, "Institutions of Privacy in the Determination of Police Administrative Practice," *American Journal of Sociology*, LXIX, 150-160 (September, 1963).

[2]The study was initiated and financed by The Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario.

global ne comprend aucun processus thérapeutique de force à compenser la perpétuation du mouvement et l'aliénation qu'il provoque.

logical tests, psychiatric examination, and documentary data from various sources;

(b) A shorter interview study of a sample of 50 first offenders;

(c) Basic information on the 18,000 male public intoxication cases that appeared in Toronto's G Court over a period of a year, and some comparable information from the court of a smaller city;

(d) Mailed questionnaires to chief constables and magistrates throughout Ontario;

(e) Participant observation of Skid Row drinking groups and police arrest practices.

The Police

The police have considerable discretion in the use they make of public intoxication laws, as the offence of drunkenness in a public place itself is very common and the initiative in making an arrest almost always lies with the police officer. The choice of arrestees is a sampling procedure, but not a random one. The Ontario chief constables were frank in admitting that the power to arrest for this offence is used highly selectively, and our own observations substantiated this. The recurrent theme in the chief constables' replies was that the drunk must be creating a disturbance or be likely to do so, or he must be in some danger of coming to harm. One police chief stated: "A person may be under the influence, but if he or she appears to be able to look after himself and is not bothering others while making his way home he is usually not molested." Another said: "Our officers are instructed not to arrest persons who are able to navigate under their own power without interfering with other persons. We drive a large number of persons to their homes if they are cooperative and give their addresses."

The homeless, unattached drinker, as well as being more likely to appear in public when he is drunk, is also more likely to come to harm, since he frequently has no sheltered place to go to and nobody to look after him. However, the police in large urban centres usually do not take time to determine whether the man has a home. They are likely to make quick judgments based on such externals as dress, companionship, and location — and, perhaps, recognition of the inebriate as a regular customer. This appears in the replies of the police chiefs in such phrases as: "Usually persons who are homeless and bothering people . . . or drawing attention to themselves," and "The habitual offender is charged on every occasion." Data on the occupations, addresses, and marital status of offenders indicate that the public intoxication charge is, in fact, used most commonly as a means of dealing with homeless, unattached drinkers. Others are also caught up in the net but they, too, are mostly from the lower classes.

An important constraint on the over-zealous and indiscriminate use of the public intoxication arrest is the opposition that would result from the interruption of role-performances if large numbers of productive citizens were

punished for a trivial offense of no political significance.[3] It is instructive that in minor traffic offenses, where the police sampling method inevitably nets many offenders with jobs and other responsibilities, the procedures for handling the cases differ markedly from public intoxication cases. Traffic offenders are generally summoned to appear, allowed to avoid trial by advance payment of the fine, and even, in some communities, provided with a night court. In contrast, drunkenness offenders are usually arrested and held for trial rather than summoned, and they are forced to appear in court during working hours, a system obviously attuned to a clientele that is predominantly jobless and without duties to families or other organizations.

One interpretation of this role of the police is that of residual social control, a responsibility that is theirs because no others are concerned. Better-off drinkers, in addition to having homes in which to drink, and taxis and cars in which to get there, are caught up in a network of relationships with others who will likely make efforts to protect them from harm and prevent their disruptive behaviour from becoming public. This role of law-enforcement agencies as a form of social control increases as one goes down the social scale, and takes in other forms of deviance. Hollingshead and Redlich in their study of mental illness and class structure, for example, found that 52.2% of the psychotics in the lowest class were brought or sent for treatment by the police or the courts, but that none of those in the two highest classes entered treatment by this route.[4]

Insofar as public intoxication laws are used for the control of homeless, unattached men, they converge in function with vagrancy laws. The "idle rogues and vagabonds" at which such laws have for centuries been aimed have been seen as a threat to the community precisely because they are detached from normal social controls, aliens who are dangerous because they have nothing to lose. The drunk arrest may serve the police as the easiest means of keeping down the number of such men in circulation, easiest because conviction is almost automatic and the police are rarely called upon to testify.

It is significant that chief constables who were polled were overwhelmingly opposed to removing the offence from the statute books and that their stated reasons frequently included the idea that an increase in other crime would result. One of the more strongly stated responses was: "If these persons were allowed to roam the streets in an intoxicated condition without fear of arrest or punishment, I can see any number of crimes, rape, robbery, thefts, assaults, being committed as a result." It would seem, then,

[3]Abraham Flexner argues that the customers of prostitutes for this reason are rarely charged with an offence. *Prostitution in Europe* (New York, 1920), 108.

[4]A. B. Hollingshead and F. C. Redlich, *Social Class and Mental Illness* (New York, 1958), 187.

that the high arrest rate of homeless drunks is partly due to this police concern with preventative control. There is a slim empirical basis for this in that some chronic offenders do commit occasional petty thefts when at large. But their criminal records also show that they very rarely commit assaults or other offences against the person once they become fully involved in the revolving door.

However, for the police the responsibility for dealing with drunks is a mixed blessing. Their job is complicated by the fact that the offenders may be sick or semi-comatose and, perhaps more important, they may have injuries, some of them hidden, or be suffering from an acute illness. Since they are by definition criminal offenders and are by custom arrested rather than summoned, the presumption is that they should be put in the lock-up unless there are reasons apparent to a layman for taking them to a hospital. Every so often an alleged drunk dies while in custody or commits suicide and the police are the subject of unfavourable publicity. This is one of the junctures at which the priority of the "criminal" over the "illness" definition of intoxication is clearly dysfunctional for the police.

The consequences of this arrest pattern for the chronic offenders themselves are several. In terms of their physical welfare and perhaps survival the net result of having their drinking bouts terminated by arrest is beneficial.[5] However, recognition of this is not prominent in the reactions of the chronic offenders themselves. They express strong animus against the police, stronger than their feelings against the courts, and in contrast to their generally accepting attitude toward the prison staff. They do not think that public intoxication should be an offence at all, and they regard the police as the people who in fact try and convict them, and that unfairly. More specifically, they complain that the police are much too zealous in arresting drunks who are harming nobody; that in doing so they discriminate on a class basis, particularly against men known to them as chronic offenders; that they are arbitrary and inconsistent, sometimes arresting men who are not drunk and at other times overlooking extreme intoxication; and that they tend to insult known drunks and physically abuse them. The validity of these accusations is not relevant here. What is important is that such beliefs, with a strong emotional component, reinforce the alienation of the chronic offenders. They become part of the common culture of Skid Row and contribute to its solidarity as a persecuted out-group.

The Courts

Drunk trials are probably the most simple, rapid, and routinized of criminal proceedings, usually taking less than a

[5]The medical study indicated that the health of the chronic offenders was surprisingly good. The main explanation appeared to be the role of the police in terminating sprees and the effect of incarceration in providing enforced recuperation and spacing sprees.

minute from beginning to end. The cast of actors is cut to a minimum; lawyers rarely appear for the accused (they appeared in less than one case in a thousand in G Court); the prosecution is usually handled by a police officer; witnesses are almost never called; there are no newspaper reporters; and the few spectators are likely to be idle onlookers rather than interested parties. Since the overwhelming majority of the accused plead guilty, the court has only to pronounce sentence and this is usually done according to a standard scale of punishment established by usage. Except for the occasional brief interchange, usually initiated by the accused who wants to put forward a plea for clemency, no argument is heard.

Formally the courts perform the same functions in drunk trials that they do in other criminal cases: what might be called the "sorting-out" function and the "legitimation" function. The sorting-out function is the outcome of the various decisions that result in a specific disposition of the case: decisions as to whether a trial should be held at all, decisions as to guilt or innocence, and the decisions regarding the penalty. The accused are put into categories which define what, if anything, may be done with them subsequently. When the trial has in theory been conducted according to the rules and the disposition based on the law, what is subsequently done to the accused is legitimated. The authority of others over the offender while he is still in custody or under supervision is now legal and therefore morally acceptable and may be backed by the use of force.

But the sorting-out function as it is performed in the drunk court is rudimentary and subject to conflicting expectations. The proving of guilt, as we have seen, is rarely necessary. Time-consuming weighing of alternative sentences tends to be discouraged by the triviality of the offence, by the limited choices open to the magistrate, and by the apparent lesson from experience that the recidivists are not going to be changed or deterred in any event.

The number of ways that the magistrate can dispose of the case is limited not only by the law but also by the lack of facilities at the disposal of the court, particularly rehabilitative facilities that could be an alternative to imprisonment. Probation officers, scarce in relation to the demand, are not often available for the supervision of drunkenness offenders. Alcoholism clinics or social welfare agencies dealing with this sort of man, if they exist, rarely have liaison with the courts.[6] In only a few jurisdictions is the magistrate given the option of sentencing offenders to a place of treatment. Some of the remaining sentencing choices open by law to the magistrates may be fictitious or inapplicable, especially where chronic offenders are concerned. A fine may in theory be an alternative to a jail

[6]Although the Salvation Army is an exception, its emphasis on spiritual regeneration through religion is in contrast to the methods of professionally-manned agencies and appears to limit the type of person whom it can influence.

sentence, but is, in fact, only if the offender can pay. We found that some 40 per cent of the first offenders in G Court were unable to pay their fines and that the proportion increased to 96 per cent among men up for their sixth or subsequent offence within the year. If the law allows the magistrate to give the accused time to pay his fine he is under an obligation to consent to this only where the accused is a good credit risk. Consequently, the privilege is rarely granted to chronic offenders, and usually only to those first offenders who have a job and an address. In effect, then, a fine is a jail sentence for most chronic offenders. The magistrate has little choice and therefore little reason to spend time exploring alternatives in court.

In sending the chronic offender to jail the magistrate is exposed to a value conflict, the nature of which has been expressed graphically by an American municipal court judge of long experience:

"In this environment, we have been driven to extreme frustrations, in part because we have been handed the two accepted tools of criminal penalization — the fine and the jail sentence — to deal with what has appeared to us to be primarily a social and medical problem. We have found ourselves dissatisfied with these tools both on philosophical and practical grounds. On the one hand, we are cast in the role of the bully trampling down and further degrading those within our society who are already the weakest and most inadequate among us, ourselves frustrated by the realization that neither do we protect society by the prevention of law violations in this regard which, of course, is the basic function of all law enforcement."[7]

The generality of this conflict is to be seen in the following written conclusion from a 1959 conference of municipal court judges:

"The alcoholic is a compulsive offender who should be helped by the court rather than punished . . . The municipal judge has the right, if not the duty, to inform his community that he is willing to continue to handle this health problem, but that he has not been given the tools to do the job. Until such tools are provided, a judge should not be required to incarcerate persons guilty of no offence other than their affliction with the illness of alcoholism."[8]

As these statements indicate, the current conflict in our society between the "illness" and "criminal" definitions of deviance may become a pressing one for the magistrate who is forced to be our agent in implementing one or the other. The illness definition, of course, implies that the proscribed behaviour is non-voluntary and that the appropriate response is treatment or some form of social repair rather than punishment. The traditional criminal definition as-

[7]*Proceedings: Conference on the Alcoholic and the Court,* (Portland; Oregon State System of Higher Education, 1963), 5.

[8]*Proceedings: Processing the Alcoholic Defendant: Rocky Mountain Regional Conference of Municipal Judges* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 90.

sumes that the actor freely chooses to misbehave and that punishment according to a graded scale of seriousness and culpability is a justified response. The conflict is likely to appear rather sharply in dealing with offenders whose behaviour is attributable to an addiction, since the illness definition has come to be widely accepted in this sphere.

Most magistrates are likely to subscribe in some degree to the illness definition, while being required by law in most jurisdictions to treat the drunken behaviour of the homeless alcoholic as a punishable offence. Even if the magistrate subscribes to the criminal definition, he is probably forced to recognize that the traditional claims for the appropriateness of punishment are weak where chronic drunkenness offenders are concerned. First, public drunkenness does not stand high in the scale of proscribed acts and secular change undoubtedly has been in the direction of greater tolerance of inebriety. Second, he cannot believe that by sending the offender to jail he is protecting society by removing from circulation a dangerous felon. Third, he cannot long maintain a belief that punishment is a deterrent, although he may think that some first offenders learn a lesson. Moreover, the appropriateness of punishment is challenged by the many manifest claims to sympathy of the chronic offenders. They appear to be unfortunates who have already been punished by circumstances: lonely, homeless, without a future, perhaps old and ill.

In Ontario the magistrate is allowed one way out of the dilemma. The Liquor Control Act enables him to sentence offenders to treatment within the reformatory system.[9] But here the paradoxes of combining clinical decisions with the judicial role become manifest. When it came into force in 1961 the provision gave the magistrate the right to sentence *third* offenders to compulsory treatment, thus designating the traditional standard of punishability — the number of offences as a criterion for treatment. Since the Act was amended in 1962 to allow Courts to send for treatment any public intoxication offender "where it appears he may benefit therefrom," magistrates have, on the whole, continued to regard recidivism as a condition of eligibility. Our study of first offenders has shown, as might be expected, that being in court for the first time does not preclude the presence of alcoholism or other conditions for which a clinician might recommend treatment.

The magistrate is given no guidance beyond the vague wording of the law, and provided with no professional help in making the decision about treatment. We have found that, as a consequence, magistrates tend to develop their own individual rules of thumb that can be quickly applied, and that these differ considerably among magistrates. For example, some feel that it is useless to send the older Skid Row alcoholics for treatment, and others feel that the treatment is appropriate only for men of this type. The research also showed that the courts throughout the pro-

[9] *Revised Statutes of Ontario, 1960,* chapter 217, with amendments.

vince differ greatly in the proportion of offenders that they sent for treatment. For the treatment facility, this has meant an unpredictable flow of patients not of their own choosing. We have also found that magistrates, seeing their failures return, have tended to become pessimistic about the possibilities of treatment.

Despite their limitations as a sorting-out mechanism, the courts still formally perform the function of a legitimation. But here, too, some qualifications are necessary. The legitimation provided by lower courts is provisional — the decisions can be challenged and upset in higher courts. On the two occasions in the last five years when the proceedings in G Court have been challenged, the appellants have been successful. The grounds need not concern us here but in both instances they involved practices or conditions common to most other trials in the court. We also found that in a period when the law prescribed minimum penalties, a large proportion of the sentences given chronic offenders were well below the statutory minimum. These distortions of the legal process can be interpreted as adaptations to the strains put on the courts by the requirement that they should deal with men of this type as criminal offenders. Undoubtedly, there are parallels in other jurisdictions.

The effect of the court experience on the offenders themselves is to add to their alienation. Their reactions to these trials are epitomized in the term "kangaroo court," which occurs so frequently in their conversation that it must be regarded as part of their common culture. In more detail, they complain: that "you can't beat a drunk charge" (a conviction is inevitable); that they are herded through (like a "bunch of sheep," as one man put it); that they are given no chance to tell their stories; that the magistrate and the policeman who conducts the prosecution are in cahoots, and so on. They complain much more frequently about the demeaning way in which they are treated than about the sentences they are given — which is not surprising in men accustomed to jail but highly conscious of their lack of status.

The Jail

In discussing the functions of the jail, we should make it clear that the "Don Jail" in Toronto, on which these observations are based, may not be typical. Many other jails may not possess in the same degree the conditions for the development of a stable and fairly complex occupational system manned almost entirely by drunkenness offenders. Since it is a large jail, and the more serious offenders awaiting trial or transfer to another institution are not required to work, the many routine housekeeping and maintenance jobs are done by the inebriates who constitute 30 to 40 per cent of the jail population. A condition for stability is unwittingly filled by the police and the courts who send the "regulars" (the term itself is significant and derives from the jail) to jail frequently and for fairly extended periods. The justification for using this case is that it brings out in exaggerated form characteristics of the adjustment of chronic drunkenness offenders to all prisons,

and also that it makes particularly evident certain potentials of these men in such a setting.

The effects conventionally cited as functions of imprisonment can be dismissed out of hand where the "regulars" are concerned. "Incapacitation" is of consequence only in regard to offenders who are dangerous when at large. "Rehabilitation" is a job the jails do not pretend to do and the recidivism characteristic of our group indicates that it is not accomplished unintentionally. However, the jail does provide an excellent setting for physical recuperation, as the results of our medical examinations showed.[10]

"Deterrence" deserves more attention. Leaving aside the inappropriateness of this expectation where an addiction is involved, the jail experience is clearly not a painful one for the "regular." There is no need to linger on what are usually thought of as the deprivations of imprisonment: the chronic drunkenness offender is already stigmatized, and already alienated from his family and respectable friends; since he rarely if ever has sexual relations with women outside, their absence is not experienced as a deprivation (certainly not for thirty days); he has no job to lose; and the food, sleeping accommodation, and other creature comforts are probably superior and certainly more predictable than he finds outside.

Of more interest are the ways in which the experience is rewarding and the fact that it complements and thus helps to maintain his pattern of life outside.

To understand this we must examine, very sketchily, the jail system. Within the walls there is a differentiated occupational structure made up of at least 17 jobs or work crews, some of them employing up to 25 inmates. The guard (or it may be a civilian employee) in charge of each crew or job functions as an employer. When he recruits a new employee the main requirement is that the man should be a "regular," somebody who can be depended upon to return frequently and for a respectable time — and also, of course, that the man should not already be employed by another crew chief who wants to keep him. The men who make the grade acquire a recognized right to the job and can legitimately expect to be re-hired each time they are admitted. Formally, all prisoners are equal, but the jobs are informally graded in a rough hierarchy of prestige, related to the status of the people who are served, the freedom of movement the job allows, how close it is to the centres of communication in the jail, and the material rewards it carries. While there is no official payment, the jobs bring with them differences in the opportunities to get tobacco, extra food, changes in clothing, more frequent showers, and in some cases better quarters. Moving to a better job is possible for those who perform well, demotion for those who abuse the opportunities of their jobs, and it is

[10]Most of the men were found to gain weight in jail. Since they were in jail frequently, this tended to prevent the *sequelae* of malnutrition associated with prolonged heavy drinking.

even possible, with time, to retire to the section of the jail reserved for the unemployables who have become too old to work.

The administration of the prison is judged largely on how well it looks after custody, internal order, and self-maintenance.[11] The "regulars" are an asset in all these respects: they do not try to escape, they are orderly and tractable, and they fill most of the work roles of the internal economy. Not surprisingly, the relationships that evolve are in some ways closer to those of an ordinary work situation than a prison. A sympathetic relationship tends to develop between many of the "regulars" and the staff, particularly within the work crews. Like foremen in industry, the crew chiefs are dependent on the cooperation of the men who work for them and must make numerous small concessions to this end. The men, from their side, have come to place a positive value on cooperation with the staff: they are allies in getting a job done, as well as in circumventing some of the more burdensome rules. It is revealing that the men who are uncooperative on the inside are usually those who have only a marginal relationship with skid row drinking groups on the outside, and also that men who have previously had serious criminal careers are more likely to be uncooperative.

The relatively responsible behaviour of the "regular" in his job tends to extend to other aspects of his life in jail. He is, for example, likely to read newspapers and news magazines and even to engage in discussions of public affairs, things he rarely does outside. The pattern of "sharing" which on the outside is likely to be confined almost entirely to alcohol includes the other scarce material objects that are valued in jail and becomes a form of altruism in the common pattern of sharing smokes, extra food, and reading material with the old unemployables who cannot reciprocate. He of course abstains from drinking — external controls have made internal controls unnecessary — but he also states with conviction that he does not miss alcohol. Apparently the relatively rewarding character of jail life has something to do with this absence of craving.

The jail life that we have described must be seen as complementary to the life the "regulars" lead outside, and the two lives as mutually reinforcing. The men seem to become adjusted to an alternation of confinement and freedom, of stable, responsible living and chaotic license. Consciously or unconsciously, their motivation during life outside to eat regularly, govern their drinking, or get a job, may be attenuated by the predictability of arrest. Their disciplined lives in prison, in turn, may be made bearable by the anticipation of the period of uncontrolled drinking. At an unconscious level, their exemplary behaviour in a situation of unjustified punishment may have the significance of a licence to transgress when they are released. Or, if they are highly ambivalent, as they give evidence of

[11]Gresham M. Sykes, *The Society of Captives* (Princeton, 1958), 18-30.

being, life outside may serve to satisfy their alienative need-dispositions and life in prison, paradoxically, to satisfy their conformative need-dispositions.[12] Many interpretations are possible.

Finally, a word about the function of jail in the integration of Skid Row drinking society. It is in jail that men have the best chance to become acquainted with others like themselves and where the newcomer has the best chance to become acculturated to Skid Row drinking norms. If you ask one of these men with whom he drinks, he is quite likely to answer, "With guys I know from jail." The great majority of the men we studied served jail terms before they became full-fledged members of Skid Row society. If there were no jail Skid Row drinking groups would undoubtedly exist, but they would probably be localized and fragmented, and recruitment to them would be much less efficient.

kid Row Drinking Society

Outside jail, membership in the society of Skid Row drinkers tends to perpetuate deviant behaviour. Their peers reward deviance with social acceptance and, without malice, make social isolation the cost of going straight. It is a society of alcoholics oriented to collective drinking almost to the exclusion of activities that have no bearing on acquiring and consuming liquor and avoiding arrest. According to their norms of reciprocity, it is incumbent on the member to share his liquor, to pool his money with others to purchase it, to share his knowledge of safe drinking places, to allow friends to drink in his room if he has found a tolerant landlord, and so on. But the sharing of other material benefits is largely irrelevant and responsibility for looking after one's fellows is not expected. As one man put it: "You have to look out for yourself unless you are sick from booze. I mean they are only interested in you to drink with."

Since little is expected of participants, membership is easily granted: social background, education, age, and appearance are irrelevant. The few unacceptable individuals are likely to be those who are known to endanger the drinking group by their aggressive, noisy, or bizarre behaviour, and those who persistently fail to reciprocate in furnishing wine. This form of company is temptingly easy to acquire for the man who has nobody else and has limited personal resources to spend in the friendship market. In drinking together, the illusion of warm camaraderie may be sustained for a while. One "regular" put it this way: "When you're drinking you're all close friends and buddies."

It also seems that what is easily acquired is little valued. The men are likely when interviewed to denigrate their Skid Row companions, reflecting in some degree their own low self-esteem; to refer to their drinking friends as "bums," "drunks," or "Skid Row characters." One man expresses it: "If you're one of the boys you're O.K. in the

[12]See Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, Ill., 1951), 253-267.

District, but there are really no close friends in the District." They seem to be saying that these relationships are unsatisfying in that they differ from true primary relations found in the family or among close friends. What is lacking is the affect or emotion characteristic of primary relations and the diffuse obligation to help each other. The true primary relation is, of course, particularistic; individuals are not substitutable, whereas easy substitution is characteristic of Skid Row interaction. Drinking groups are continually breaking up; members disperse to meet up with others and form new groups, sometimes going through several changes of companionship in a day.

The persistence of Skid Row drinking society in its present form obviously depends on the modes of redistributing the affluence of the host society. Money for the purchase of alcohol must be forthcoming through panhandling, and, to some extent, through pensions and welfare payments. The Skid Row drinkers also depend from time to time on the numerous charitable organizations that furnish food, clothing, and shelter. Although the alcoholics usually eat little when on a spree and sometimes find other places to sleep, the hostels and missions make it possible for them to meet these minimum creature requirements at critical junctures and thus enable them to get by without changing their behaviour. Some of the organizations go further in unwittingly encouraging dependence by serving meals at times which conflict with holding a job, requiring the men to leave the hostel if they are employed, and in other ways making help and a regular occupation incompatible.

Conclusion

The criminal role, as many writers following Durkheim have observed, is inherently alienating. Since punishment serves as an occasion for reaffirming the importance of common norms, as well as for displacing aggression, the criminal is in a sense a scapegoat. The secondary result is that he tends to be isolated from claims on others and, under the appropriate circumstances, driven into the company of persons who are similarly stigmatized. In a modern society with elements of a puritan tradition and a fondness for legislating, the official machinery for stigmatization may continue to apply to forms of proscribed behaviour that are no longer popularly regarded as criminal or dangerous. If the proscribed behaviour is also susceptible to definition as the symptom of an illness, the conditions are created for value-conflict, compromises, and, eventually, fundamental changes that would make therapy or domiciliary care the dominant means of social control.

In the revolving door system as it now exists, the alienating effect of criminal stigmatization is added to the effects of alcohol addiction, and to other circumstances and personal characteristics that make for the isolation of the participants from kinship groups and the occupational structure. Recruits to the revolving door find themselves in a system that supplies and rewards the addiction, while add-

ing to the reasons for seeking relief from tension. The distribution of scarce professional services and related resources is such that the Skid Row inebriate is rarely involved in therapeutic relationships. If he is, the relationships are usually too superficial and short-lived to compete with the immediate gratifications that are easily available in the revolving door.